

## SLEEPING DOGS

Apropos of nothing, she said, well, what do you think?

He said: you've gotten old, ugly. You're boring me. I'm depressed. My job is a dead end. I don't feel well and my twenty year old mistress is getting married. I love you, in a way. I'll stay with you, I guess. What choice do we have?

She cried a while, cheered up and blew her nose. Well, she said, what do you want to do tonight?

## THINK JAPANESE

On the plane, after two drinks, the tile salesman spoke up: Few years ago, driving near Logan, Utah, I met this guy. More of a creature, really. Luster red. Ears down to his chin. Mouth like a belly button. Been traveling through space, he said. Now, this Milky Way of ours is nothing but a cloud in the sky of a planet fifty times its size. And all time past and all time to come is no more than a hour.

O.K. I says to him, Creature, can we do business? You want tiles out there? You like red ones, we got red ones. Green ones? We got green ones too. You know what, doesn't the son of a bitch go bad on me, getting bigger and bigger and starting to smell like a barn. Well, I say, if that's the way you feel, you ain't worth beans, and I leave him there on the road. Listen: think Japanese and forget about space.

## SO HELP ME GOD

Yesterday, my boss said, do me a favor? Lay off the secretaries. Sure, I said.

Later, some wino asked me for a quarter. I told him, gee, sorry pal, I just got the can myself.

And near Madison Square Garden, a guy wanted me to sign a petition outlawing the neutron bomb. I'm still working on it, I said, and not allowed to get involved in politics. His eyebrows jumped a foot.



When I got home, Marilyn yelled, where in hell you been, dinner's spoiled? I thought of saying that I was out drinking with the boss, but it just popped out that I stopped to watch a big fire. She was surly all night, but the burnt dinner tasted better than the cooked ones.

Later, when Marilyn was in the bathroom throwing mud on her face or whatever, I got Trudy on the phone. She was crying I didn't love her. I said, listen baby, I've been lying all day, don't you think I want to tell the truth? She got happy. I looked up and winked at myself in the hall mirror.

In bed, Marilyn yawned and asked what time it was. Twenty to two, I mumbled, too lazy to look. She wondered how in hell it had gotten so late.

## THE HAND OF THE POTTER

Al got off booze by making rifles. I helped him.

We used to work all night, every weekend in his basement. Al sanded and drew designs and I packed bullets. We never talked. Sometimes, we took a break and looked through gun magazines. We went to bed late. It was nice to stand by the window, looking out at the snow.

One night, Al loaded an 1842 Range Shooter, put the barrel to his head and pulled the trigger. It didn't work. He grabbed a Colt Scout Pistol, put a bullet in the chamber, stuck it in his mouth and shut his eyes. It didn't work either.

We cleaned up the shop, tossed the magazines in a corner and went up to bed. The snow blew against the windows.

Next morning, a little after dawn, he started drinking.

-- John Lowry

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